Environmental Bulletin

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from the Savannah River Site

DOE Proposes New Wetland Action Along Fourmile Branch

Public Invited to Comment

The Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to install underground barrier wall/base injection systems to replace the existing pump/treat/reinjection systems currently addressing the contaminated groundwater associated with the closed F- and H-Area Seepage Basins at the Savannah River Site (SRS). The underground barrier walls in both the F- and H-Area project locations would contain the residual tritium, ultimately reducing the released amount through radioactive decay over time. Tritium is the most pervasive contaminant reaching Fourmile Branch. Other contaminants (including low pH and metals) are generally commingled with the tritium so that a system optimized for tritium remediation would also be optimized for other contaminants. These underground systems would entail a series of barrier walls (i.e., funnels) and openings (i.e., gates) that would both contain and direct the underground discharge. Barrier wall installation methods under consideration include jet grouting and deep soil mixing. A base injection system would also be installed at the F-Area location to remove metals in the gate areas of that remediation system.

The purpose of these proposed actions is to provide remediation systems that are more passive and more technically feasible than the existing systems, while still meeting the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permitted goals (i.e., reduction in the contaminant releases to Fourmile Branch). Both the project sites and the proposed corrective action technology were addressed in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental impact statement (EIS) "Waste Management Activities for Groundwater Protection" (DOE/EIS-0120). In addition, a presentation on these proposed remediation systems was made to the Environmental Restoration Committee of the SRS Citizen's Advisory Board (CAB) on May 13, 2003.

The groundwater from these RCRA-permitted corrective action systems outcrops at the seeplines downgradient of the systems. This groundwater discharge determines the size and location of a series of slope wetlands associated with the Fourmile Branch drainage corridor. Installation of the proposed corrective action systems may affect the volume and location of the outcropped discharge, and therefore the size and/or location of these slope wetlands. In accordance with DOE regulations for compliance with floodplain and wetland environmental review requirements (10 CFR Part 1022), DOE will prepare a wetland assessment for these proposed DOE actions.

Comments regarding this notice and the scope of the wetland assessment are due on or before December 15, 2003.

Want More Information?

If you would like copies of either the wetland assessment when it is completed or the previously mentioned CAB presentation, please contact:

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